

## Message Text

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PAGE 01 STATE 119470 TOSEC 010192

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FM SECSTATE WASHDC

TO USDEL SECRETARY IMMEDIATE

S E C R E T STATE 119470 TOSEC 010192

NODIS

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: OVIP (KISSINGER, HENRY A.) PFOR, CH

SUBJECT: PRC COMMENT ON MAYAGUEZ OPERATION

REF: SECTO 1055

FOR GOMPERT FROM GLEYSTEN AND LORD(HABIB IS AWAY)

1. PRC COMMENT ON MAYAGUEZ OPERATION HAS CONSISTED OF  
THREE ITEMS.

-- AT A DRV RECEPTION IN PEKING ON MAY 15, VICE  
PREMIER LI HSIEN-NIEN DESCRIBED THE US ACTION AS AN "ACT  
OF PIRACY," AND THIS WAS MENTIONED IN PEOPLE'S DAILY REPORT  
ON THE RECEPTION.

-- AN NCNA ARTICLE CARRIED IN PEOPLE'S DAILY MAY 16  
SAID THE "USG HAS BRAZENLY SENT PLANES TO BOMB AND ATTACK  
CAMBODIAN TERRITORY AND BOATS ON THE PRETEXT OF RESCUING"

SECRET

SECRET

PAGE 02 STATE 119470 TOSEC 010192

THE MAYAGUEZ, CHARGED THAT THE SHIP WAS ENGAGED IN SPYING,

AND CONCLUDED THAT "THIS ONLY SHOWS THAT US IMPERIALISM HAS NOT YET LEARNED THE PROPER LESSON FROM ITS DEFEATS IN CAMBODIA AND VIETNAM."

-- ON MAY 17, PEOPLE'S DAILY CARRIED "COMMENTATOR" ARTICLE CALLING US ACTIONS "ACTS OF PIRACY PURE AND SIMPLE." REFERRING TO USG STATEMENT THAT CAMBODIAN SEIZURE OF SHIP WAS "ACT OF PIRACY," ARTICLE SAID "THIS TRICK OF 'THE THIEF CALLING STOP THIEF' FULLY EXPOSES THE SAVAGE FEATURES OF US IMPERIALISM." IT CHARGED THAT "US IMPERIALISTS ARE IRRECONCILABLE TO THE VICTORIES OF THE REVOLUTIONARY PEOPLE AND CONTINUE TO SABOTAGE AND MAKE TROUBLE," AND CONCLUDED "THE CHINESE GOVERNMENT AND PEOPLE WILL, AS IN THE PAST, RESOLUTELY SUPPORT THE CAMBODIAN PEOPLE IN THEIR JUST STRUGGLE IN DEFENSE OF STATE SOVEREIGNTY AND AGAINST US AGGRESSION. IF US IMPERIALISM DOES NOT DRAW A LESSON FROM ITS DEFEAT IN INDOCHINA AND CONTINUES TO BE HOSTILE TO THE INDOCHINESE PEOPLE, IT WILL CERTAINLY SUFFER MORE IGNOMINIOUS DEFEAT."

2. PRC UNDOUBTEDLY FELT COMPELLED TO CRITICIZE US ACTION IN ORDER TO MAINTAIN ITS CREDENTIALS WITH CAMBODIANS, TO MEET DOMESTIC REQUIREMENTS AND TO AVOID ANY IMPRESSION THAT IT WAS WILLING TO "COLLUDE" WITH US IN RESOLVING THE MATTER. (WHITE HOUSE PRESS SPOKESMAN CONFIRMED MAY 15 THAT WE HAD TRIED TO PASS MESSAGE TO CAMBODIANS THROUGH PRC.) WHILE THE LANGUAGE IS FAIRLY STRONG, THE PRC DOWNPLAYED THEIR CRITICISM SOMEWHAT BY USING A "COMMENTATOR" ARTICLE, WHICH HAS LESS AUTHORITY THAN A PEOPLE'S DAILY EDITORIAL OR A GOVERNMENT STATEMENT. (BOTH DRV AND PRG ISSUED GOVERNMENT STATEMENTS.)

3. IN A LOW KEY-WAY, WE HAVE ALREADY INDICATED TO CHINESE OUR DISPLEASURE. DURING LUNCHEON CONVERSATION WITH PRCLD DEPUTY CHIEF HAN HSU MAY 15, GLEYSTEN TOOK ISSUE WITH LI HSIEN-NIEN'S DESCRIPTION OF US ACTION TO RECOVER MAYAGUEZ AND ITS CREW AS "ACT OF PIRACY." HE STATED THAT CAMBODIAN SEIZURE OF VESSEL WAS AN ILLEGAL ACT VIOLATING INNOCENT PASSAGE AND US MILITARY ACTIONS  
SECRET

SECRET

PAGE 03 STATE 119470 TOSEC 010192

WERE IN ACCORD WITH RIGHT OF SELF-DEFENSE UNDER UN CHARTER. HAN HSU DID NOT GIVE GROUND, BUT PRESUMABLY REPORTED THE CONVERSATION.

4. SUBSEQUENTLY, WE RECEIVED A TELEGRAM FROM BUSH MENTIONING FIRST TWO CHINESE COMMENTS LISTED ABOVE AND RECOMMENDING THAT WE SET "RECORD STRAIGHT ON THOSE EFFORTS WE MADE TO AVOID HAVING TO TAKE MILITARY ACTION

AND, IN ADDITION, LETTING THE CHINESE KNOW THAT THEIR PROPAGANDA WILL NOT ALWAYS GO UNANSWERED.; WE UNDERSTAND THAT SECRETARY SAW THIS TELEGRAM JUST BEFORE HIS MAY 16 PRESS CONFERENCE AND DECIDED HE DID NOT WANT TO GO THAT FAR.

5. WE AGREE WITH BUSH THAT WE SHOULD NOT GIVE THE CHINESE THE IMPRESSION THAT WE ARE ALWAYS WILLING TO LET THEIR CRITICISMS OF US GO UNCHALLENGED. IN VIEW OF THE POINTS MENTIONED ABOVE, HOWEVER, WE CONCLUDE THAT REOPENING THE ISSUE WITH THE CHINESE AT THIS SOMEWHAT BELATED STAGE WOULD NOT SERVE A MAJOR PURPOSE. THE SECRETARY WOULD OF COURSE HAVE THE OPTION OF MENTIONING OUR DISPLEASURE TO HUANG CHEN IN HIS NEXT MEETING. BUILDING ON HIS LAST CONVERSATION WITH HUANG CHEN, HE COULD ALSO MENTION OUR CONCERN ABOUT THE INCREASING REFERENCES IN PRC COMMENTARY TO "US DEFEAT" IN INDOCHINA AND OUR "STRATEGIC PASSIVITY" AND ISOLATION.

6. IF SECRETARY DECIDES SOMETHING SHOULD BE DONE NOW, WE BELIEVE LORD AND GLEYSTEN SHOULD CALL IN HAN HSU, AS THIS WOULD BE A MORE DIRECT WAY THAN A PUBLIC STATEMENT TO MAKE OUR POINT WITH CHINESE. THEY COULD STRESS THE RIGHT OF INNOCENT PASSAGE (CALLING THE SPYING CHARGE ABSOLUTELY GROUNDLESS), NOTE THAT THE CAMBODIAN ACTION WAS ILLEGAL BY ALL STANDARDS OF INTERNATIONAL LAW AND PRACTICE AND POINT OUT THAT WE TRIED TO OBTAIN THE RELEASE OF THE VESSEL AND CREW BY DIPLOMATIC MEANS. THEY COULD CONCLUDE BY SAYING THAT PARTICULARLY IN VIEW OF THE CHINESE REFUSAL TO ASSIST IN OUR DIPLOMATIC EFFORT, WE CONSIDER THE CHINESE STATEMENTS ESPECIALLY UNHELPFUL. INGERSOLL

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